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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE

Thirty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 568th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 31 March 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. MIKULKA (Czech Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

MATTERS RELATING TO THE DEFINITION AND DELIMITATION OF OUTER SPACE AND TO THE CHARACTER AND UTILIZATION OF THE GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT, INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF WAYS AND MEANS TO ENSURE THE RATIONAL AND EQUITABLE USE OF THE GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (continued)

1. Mr. CAMACHO (Ecuador) said that the change of attitude noted at the current session with respect to the treatment of that agenda item might pave the way for the formulation of principles on the subject, as demonstrated by the working document presented by the Russian Federation, the informal document of the chairman of the working group and the official submission to the Subcommittee by Colombia of a document on the use of the geostationary orbit. However, although the impasse with respect to the consideration of the item had been overcome, it must be borne in mind that a regime needed to be established to regulate the use of and access to the geostationary orbit which took into account the needs of developing countries including the equatorial countries which had a special relationship with the orbit because of gravitational phenomena that occurred only at the Earth's equator.

2. He stressed the importance of international cooperation in ensuring that the orbit would be used for the benefit of mankind as a whole for exclusively peaceful uses and that the future needs of developing countries including those over which the orbit would pass were provided for. In that connection, he stressed the importance of the Subcommittee's work in defining clear-cut, fair and equitable rules in order to ensure that space exploration benefited all countries regardless of their technological capacity.

3. Since no one could forecast what society's future technological needs might be, it was also necessary to consider the problem of the saturation of that limited and finite natural resource. For that reason, the international community should establish the necessary safeguards to ensure that in future all States would have access to the orbit.

4. Efforts must continue in order to reach agreement with respect to the definition and delimitation of outer space. The change in the attitude of some members of the Subcommittee and the documents submitted augured well for the Subcommittee's work in the future.

5. Mr. BABAR (Pakistan) said that his delegation had always argued in favour of the need to clearly define and delimit outer space since such a definition was a legal requirement as well as a practical necessity, and he was confident that the Subcommittee would soon reach consensus on the subject. In that connection, he noted with considerable interest the valuable working paper presented by the delegation of the Russian Federation (A/AC.105/C.2/L.189) which provided a novel approach in order to break the deadlock in discussions of that item. Although the initiative was not an end in itself, it could enable the Subcommittee to arrive at a decision on the definition and delimitation of outer

(Mr. Babar, Pakistan)

space with its own legal regime that was distinct from that applicable to national airspace which was subject to State sovereignty.

6. Pakistan shared the view that the geostationary orbit was a limited natural resource which should be utilized for the benefit of all mankind. Since it was a finite resource, a special legal regime should be evolved to ensure rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit by all States, taking into account the special interests of the developing countries and without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union. The working paper of the delegation of Colombia could serve as a basis for further discussion.

7. A related point worth highlighting was the desirability for the Subcommittee to begin considering the question of debris in the geostationary orbit and in outer space in general, with a view to including it on the Subcommittee's agenda in the near future. In view of the danger that the unchecked growth of space debris posed to the exploration and utilization of outer space, the time was ripe to undertake such an exercise

8. The CHAIRMAN said that the Subcommittee had completed its consideration of agenda item 4.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.